

Message Text

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SUBJ: TORONTO STAR AFFAIR - CANADIAN PUBLISHERS' ASSOCIATION
CHARGES GOVERNMENT WITH DISCRIMINATION

REF: TORONTO 474

1. AT ITS ANNUAL MEETING APRIL 20 IN TORONTO, THE CANADIAN DAILY NEWSPAPERS PUBLISHERS' ASSOCIATION PASSED A RESOLUTION CONDEMNING THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT FOR DISCRIMINATORY ACTION IN CHARGING THE TORONTO SUN UNDER THE OFFICIAL SECRETS ACT. THE RESOLUTION, INTRODUCED BY THE PUBLISHER OF THE EDMONTON JOURNAL AND SECONDED BY THE PUBLISHER OF THE VANCOUVER SUN READ: "IT IS PROPOSED THAT WHILE WE DO NOT NECESSARILY SUPPORT THE ACTION OF THE TORONTO SUN, WE DO CONDEMN THE DISCRIMINATORY ACTION OF THE GOVERNMENT IN CHARGING THE SUN UNDER THE OFFICIAL SECRETS ACT, AND WE ASK MR. ROBINETTE (LEGAL COUNSEL JOHN J. ROBINETTE) TO EXAMINE THE ACT AS IT RELATES TO NEWSPAPERS, AND TO ADVISE US OF REPRESENTATIONS WE MIGHT MAKE TO THE GOVERNMENT TO MAKE THE ACT MORE IN TUNE WITH THE TIMES IN A DEMOCRATIC COUNTRY WHERE FREEDOM OF THE PRESS IS AN ESSENTIAL REQUISITE OF A FREE PEOPLE."

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2. IN HIS REMARKS SUPPORTING HIS RESOLUTION J. P. O'CALLAGHAN, PUBLISHER OF THE EDMONTON JOURNAL, SAID "THERE IS NO QUESTION IN ANYBODY'S MIND IN THIS ROOM, I AM CERTAIN, THAT THE DECISION TO PROSECUTE THE SUN WAS BASED ON VINDICTIVENESS, PRESUMABLY FOLLOWING THE OLD JOHN F. KENNEDY DICTUM, 'DON'T GET MAD - GET EVEN.'" O'CALLAGHAN CONTINUED THAT THE NATURE OF THE EDITORIAL

DECISION OF THE SUN IN PUBLISHING THE MATERIAL INVOLVED IS IMMATERIAL. "THE MOST DISTURBING PART OF THE WHOLE AFFAIR", HE SAID, WAS THAT THE GOVERNMENT CHOSE NOT TO PROSECUTE THE MAN WHO WAS THE CAUSE OF IT ALL, M.P. TOM COSSITT, BUT "BY VENTING ITS RAGE ON THE NEWSPAPER INSTEAD OF ON THE M.P., THE GOVERNMENT SHOWED POOR JUDGEMENT, INDULGING ITSELF IN AN ATTACK ON A NEWSPAPER THAT REFUSED TO BE INTIMIDATED BY THREATS THAT HAD PREVIOUSLY BEEN LEVELLED AT THE M.P. HIMSELF." O'CALLAGHAN SAID THAT WHILE THE ASSOCIATION "SHOULD BE PREPARED TO CONDEMN THE GOVERNMENT FOR ITS VINDICTIVENESS, FOR ITS UNPRECEDENTED ACTION AGAINST THE SUN, FOR ITS DISCRIMINATORY MOVE, FOR PROTECTING THE REAL VILLAIN, MR. COSSITT,.....WE SHOULD AVOID COMMENDING THE SUN FOR DOING WHAT IT DID. I AM NOT AT ALL SURE THAT THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE PUBLIC WERE SERVED BY THAT PARTICULAR PUBLICATION."

3. O'CALLAGHAN CONCLUDED THAT THE GOVERNMENT, HAVING SERVED NOTICE THAT THE OFFICIAL SECRETS ACT IS STILL A FORMIDABLE WEAPON TO PROTECT THE COUNTRY, SHOULD NOW "HAVE ENOUGH SENSE TO DROP THE WHOLE THING.....THERE IS TOO MUCH SOUND AND FURY IN THE WHOLE AFFAIR AND NOT ENOUGH WISDOM BY EITHER PARTY - THE GOVERNMENT OR THE SUN." DIGGINS

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